STAGLEAP PROVINCIAL PARK

PURPOSE STATEMENT AND ZONING PLAN

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Approved by:

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STAGLEAP PROVINCIAL PARK
Purpose Statement and Zoning Plan

Primary Role

The **primary** role of Stagleap Provincial Park is to protect remnant subalpine ecosystems, representative wildlife and habitat of the Southern Columbia Mountains Ecosection. The park has a key role in protecting habitat for internationally endangered mountain caribou. A remnant herd of approximately 40 individuals migrate back and forth across the international border and is heavily dependent on the park to facilitate this movement.

Stagleap Provincial Park and the surrounding area have a relatively high concentration of backcountry use which imposes further pressure on mountain caribou survival. The highway corridor and adjacent land use (forestry) is also a significant threat. To date, data regarding impacts on caribou population from recreation activity have been difficult to gather because of compounding factors (predation, habitat alteration).

In addition, the park provides important habitat for the vulnerable Southern Selkirk population of grizzly bear (approximately 30 to 50 individuals remaining). This remnant population is genetically isolated from the Purcell population because of highway and resource development and has been for at least several bear generations. Likewise, grizzlies living in the southern Selkirks, south of Hwy 3A, are isolated from populations residing to the north of the West Arm of Kootenay Lake.

Despite this fragmentation of populations, Stagleap Provincial Park is well suited in supplying excellent high alpine ridge habitat near the apex of the Selkirk range where it crosses Hwy 3. Studies indicate that areas where human influence are minimal provide important linkages for grizzly bear movement.

With respect to invertebrate species, a large colony (measuring approximately 189 m^2) of a rare arachnid was discovered in the park in 1989. The spider, *Microhexura idahoana* (Chamberlin and Ivie) belongs to the group commonly known as tarantulas. The discovery was the first identification of the species in Canada. Although at the moment the endangered status of insects is not assessed, some experts suggest that *Microhexura idahoana* is one of the better candidates for valid CDC red-listing in the province. A closely related species in the United States, *Microhexura montivaga* has been extensively studied and is only one of two spiders protected under the US *Endangered Species Act*.

Secondary Role

The **secondary** role is to provide tourism travel route and backcountry recreational opportunities oriented to a scenic mountain pass. Stagleap Provincial Park encompasses Kootenay Pass, the highest year round highway pass in Canada.

Immediately adjacent to the highway is Bridal Lake, a small scenic water body which is stocked with rainbow trout. Rest stop facilities include a log cabin with interpretive signage and picnic tables along the lakeshore. However, service withdrawals have removed toilets, formal park signage and garbage receptacles. Consideration is also being given to closing the picnic area and removing the log cabin due to operational/maintenance costs.

Stagleap Provincial Park is one of the most accessible backcountry skiing destinations in the region and has consistently excellent snow conditions that have made it a major backcountry ski and snowshoe destination. Hiking the high alpine areas, such as Ripple Ridge and Cornice Ridge, is also very popular in the summer months. A Ministry of Forests backcountry cabin, located just outside the southern park boundary, further complements multi-day recreation opportunities.

Known Management Issues	**Response**
Mountain caribou are at risk.	Specific to the Southern Selkirk population, recovery plans are focused primarily on the United States Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan (1993) as the population (30 to 40 individuals) is transboundary. Parks and Protected Areas will actively participate and support initiatives in Local Recovery Action Group (local RAG's) whose roles are outlined in the Mountain Caribou Recovery Strategy.
Mountain caribou habitat protection.	The Goal 2 proposed addition south of the park is an extremely important contribution to the mountain caribou habitat. That process should move forward (responsibility rests with Ministry of Sustainable Resource Management). Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan (KBLUP) has made provisions for connectivity corridors within and between Resource Management Zones (Stagleap is situated along the border of the Arrow RMZ and Kootenay Lake RMZ). Retain old growth, including fighting fires and protection from insect and disease.

Known Management Issues	Response
Isolated grizzly bear population.	Provisions for regional connectivity corridors supplied by KBLUP. Apply research methodology currently utilized in Purcell ranges (DNA fingerprinting) to understand movement (linkage zones) and genetic composition of subpopulations.
Highway bisecting park creates additional risk to wildlife.	Ensure attractants (e.g. road salt) are controlled and/or mitigated. Reduction in traffic speed through the park (signage).
Avalanche control impacts.	Monitor, evaluate and mitigate Gasex environmental impacts.
Service withdrawal in park.	Invite partnerships from local community groups (Creston/Salmo) and First Nations. Rest stop facilities maintained by Ministry of Transportation.
Fish-bearing lake shoreline and water quality contamination.	Work with Ministry of Transportation and DFO to stop gravel and salt contamination and restore natural values of Bridal Lake. Monitor Ministry of Transportation's yard and highway snowplowing strategy. Initiate a formal lake water quality monitoring process. Monitor lake shoreline for sand deposition and habitat loss. Monitor fish health/ population. Continue stocking program.
Winter backcountry recreation: Public safety and risk of avalanches.	Increased signage (cabin, trailheads) to educate the public about avalanche hazards and encourage proper use/ equipment.
Motorized access through park. A Forest Service Road bisects the southern portion of the park. Summer use is minimal and poses little risk to caribou/wildlife habitat. However, winter use encourages snowmobile activity in backcountry areas.	Winter road closure for snowmobiles. Consider permanent closure and full deactivation. The road is no longer used.
Some Ministry of Transportation facilities are no longer being used (i.e. residence, gravel pit).	Contact Ministry of Transportation about facility needs and rehabilitate areas no longer necessary.
Invasive non-native (tansy, oxeye daisy) and noxious weeds (knapweed) threaten native species and wildlife habitat.	Inventory species. Develop and implement control strategies to protect native species and wildlife habitat.

Zoning

Intensive Recreation (approximately 1125 ha or 99.3% of the park)

Objective: To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility-oriented outdoor recreation opportunities.

Natural Environment (approximately 6 ha or 0.5% of the park)

Objectives: To protect scenic values and to provide for recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment.

Special Feature (approximately 2 ha or 0.2% of the park)

Objectives: To protect and present significant natural or cultural resources, features or processes because of their special character, fragility and heritage values.

Conservation

Representation -ecosection	☒	Situated in the South Columbia Mountains. This ecosection is under-represented (6.38%) in the PA system. Stagleap Provincial Park provides (3%) of the province-wide PA representation of this ecosection. Three other parks West Arm (60%), Kianuko (26%) and Lockhart Creek (9%) have more representation.
-biogeoclimatic subzone/variant	☐	This is a unique situation where three influences at the BEC level come together. The park principally contributes to the representation of the well represented ESSFwc4 (16.49%). Stagleap Provincial Park contributes 0.93% of the overall representation of this ecosystem unit. The park makes minor contributions to the ESSFwc1 and ESSFwcp4 as well.
Special Feature	☒	Remnant ecosystem: contains the only representation in the ecosection of the ESSFwc1 (100%) and the ESSFwcp4 (100%)
Rare/Endangered Values	☒	Internationally significant mountain caribou herd (r), grizzly bear (b), red-tailed chipmunk (b), tall bluebells (b), lace fern (b). Rare spider species, *Microhexura idahoana*, occurs within the park. The entire park has not been inventoried. Other species are suspected.
Scientific/Research Opportunities	☒	Recreational activity impacts on caribou population. Measuring transplant success (transboundary). DNA fingerprinting of grizzly bears to determine genetic diversity within Columbia mountains and track individual movement (connectivity/ corridor issues).

Recreation

Representation -backcountry	☒	Backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, snowboarding, alpine touring. 1 - 2 day backpacking opportunities.
-destination	☒	Backcountry ski touring, snowboarding and snowshoeing. Hiking in the summer months.
-travel corridor	☒	Southern transprovincial highway. Rest stop features include cabin for day use, scenic lake setting. One of the highest mountain passes in Canada.
-local recreation	☒	Fishing on Bridal Lake. Hiking opportunities along alpine ridges, nature appreciation. Skiing on well established trail system (former Forest Service recreation trails)
Special Opportunities	☐	None identified.
Education/Interpretation Opportunities	☒	Cabin situated at rest stop provides signage pertaining to nature interpretation of surrounding landscape and historical significance of the area.

Cultural Heritage

Representation	☒	Ktunaxa/Kinbasket used the area for hunting and fish harvesting. Historic Dewdney Trail passes near the park. Not yet assessed.
Special Feature	☐	None identified.

Other Management Considerations

Other Designations	☐	None identified.
Relationship to other PAs	☒	1 of 4 provincial parks along Hwy 3 between Trail and Creston (127 km).
Co-operative Management Arrangements	☐	None identified.
Partnerships	☒	Selkirk College Avalanche Monitoring and GIS mapping.

Vulnerability	☒	There is a concern with mountain caribou and grizzly bear habitat loss in the area. Impact on rare spider colony by unsuspecting hikers. The lake water quality and riparian habitat impacts are also a concern.
Relationship to other Strategies	☒	Mountain Caribou Recovery Strategy. Selkirk Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan - United States Fish and Wildlife Service (1993). Grizzly Bear Conservation Strategy. Kootenay Boundary Land Use Plan (Higher Level Plan Order).

Area: 1,133 hectares

Date of establishment: August 17, 1964

Zoning Map - Stagleap Provincial Park

Projection: Albers Equal Areas
Datum: NAD83

Intensive Recreation
Natural Environment
Special Feature
Protected Area Boundary

0 1
km

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